

## **Public Comment on Proposed Bill 6880**

Thank you, Chairman Hwang, for holding a hearing on modifying 8-30g. This statute requires significant change to more fairly and comprehensively serve the needs of those who qualify for affordable housing in Connecticut.

Currently 8-30g discriminates against the State's vulnerable senior population. Please modify 8-30g to allow a full Housing Unit-Equivalent Point for affordable senior housing as proposed in Proposed Bill 6880. When 8-30g was devised, an effort was made to incentivize the creation of affordable housing for families. Seniors were perceived as already benefiting from affordable housing programs. As of 2017, seniors must compete with all other categories of eligible persons and families for affordable housing. Providing only a one-half Housing Unit-Equivalent Point discriminates against seniors. Seniors are not half persons worth only one half a Housing Unit-Equivalent Point. 8-30g as written reduces the incentive to build senior housing and is one of the factors causing seniors to leave our state. We thank you for correcting this issue in your proposed bill.

There are four areas where clauses should be added to Proposed Bill 6880 to provide greater opportunity for affordable housing and better protect the environment and the safety of Connecticut citizens.

Please amend 8-30g to require that all affordable units constructed under 8-30g be built to full Universal Design or ADA compliance. Lack of Universal Design or ADA compliance reduces the opportunities for the disabled and for

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seniors to obtain affordable housing. 8-30g fails to address the special needs of the disabled of any age that require affordable housing. This requirement will not significantly add to construction costs, but it will open an important amount of affordable housing for those who desperately need it. Of course not every Universal Design/ADA unit built under 8-30g will be occupied by the disabled, but by creating Universal Design/ADA housing stock, the disabled will be able to compete equally with seniors and with families for affordable housing.

Please consider adding a clause to Proposed Bill 6880 stating that “set-aside developments shall be prohibited in all flood zones as defined by FEMA.” Under current regulations, 8-30g can be used by developers to build in areas of serious hazard due to flooding. An 8-30g apartment building in Fairfield sits in a “Special Flood Hazard Area,” one of the highest risk areas as defined by FEMA. This location was the site of Fairfield’s only known drowning by flooding. Since the 8-30g statute already allows denial of an appeal in cases of demonstrated health and safety risks, the legislative intent of the drafters of 8-30g should be further specified by adding a clause to prevent development in flood zones.

Another clause you might consider for 6880 should state, “set-aside developments shall be prohibited in all areas regulated by the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency of the appropriate municipality.” Judges hearing 8-30g appeals have permitted development in these areas, and such development risks significant harm to the environment. Conventional development

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is not permitted in Wetlands areas under other circumstances, and 8-30g should not be exempt from Wetlands regulations.

There should also be a clause in 6880 prohibiting development in watersheds that serve active drinking water supplies. An 8-30g development in a drinking water watershed was allowed in Ridgefield, and such intrusions into drinking water watersheds are clear health risks. Since the 8-30g statute already allows denial of an appeal in cases of demonstrated health risks, the legislative intent of the drafters of 8-30g should be further specified by adding a clause to prevent development in watersheds.

Finally, I would like to thank our legislators, Senator Hwang, Representative Devlin, and Representative Kupchick for sponsoring Proposed Bill 6880 and for their continuing and vigorous support for neighborhood issues in Fairfield.

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